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Letter dated 15 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of New Zealand, the Security Council is scheduled to hold, on 30 July 2015, an open debate on the subject "Maintenance of international peace and security: peace and security challenges facing small island developing States".

In order to help to steer the discussion on the subject, New Zealand has prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gerard van **Bohemen**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of New Zealand

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Annex to the letter dated 15 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on peace and security challenges facing small island developing States

1. Introduction

Small island developing States face a range of peace and security challenges, from traditional armed conflict to transnational crime and piracy, illicit exploitation of natural resources, climate change and climate-related natural disasters and uneven development. Taken together with the broader vulnerabilities faced by many small island developing State communities, these challenges can disproportionately affect national stability, fuel conflict across regions and ultimately have an impact on the maintenance of international peace and security.

On 30 July 2015, New Zealand will hold an open debate in the Security Council on peace and security challenges facing small island developing States. While a number of the issues affecting small island developing States have been raised in the Council before, this debate is an opportunity for such States to highlight specific challenges and vulnerabilities that they face in maintaining peace and security.

2. Background

The United Nations classifies 52 countries and territories as small island developing States, with a combined population of over 50 million people. This includes 37 Member States, one fifth of the total membership. Small island developing States are susceptible to a range of security and sustainable development challenges. Vulnerabilities are exacerbated by small size, remoteness and narrow resource, economic and export bases, as well as exposure to global environmental challenges.

In the outcome document adopted at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa in 2014, Member States:

- Reaffirmed the importance of peace and security issues for small island developing States;
- Recognized the centrality of sea-level rise and other adverse impacts of climate change, which, for many small island developing States, represent the gravest of threats to their survival and viability;
- Recognized the negative effects that conflict, violence, trafficking in persons, drug trafficking, cybercrime and transnational organized crime can have on small island developing States, and supported the efforts of those States to combat them;
- Noted the challenges facing small island developing States, in terms of limited resources and capacities, in responding effectively to multiple crises;
- Recognized the urgent need to enhance international cooperation and action to address the unique and particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States.

This open debate will provide an opportunity for the Council to consider these specific peace and security challenges and consider how the United Nations system can best respond.

3. Peace and security challenges faced by small island developing States

During the open debate, participants may wish to focus on the impact of the following challenges on the peace and security of small island developing States.

Transnational crime and piracy

Transnational organized crime and piracy are key challenges for many small island developing States. Given their limited size and capacities, such States face major challenges in effectively patrolling their often expansive exclusive economic zones and are more susceptible to disruption by criminal networks than larger and more developed economies. Some small island developing States find themselves a transit point for the illicit trafficking of drugs, people and small arms and light weapons, with often severe consequences for local populations.

Illicit exploitation of natural resources, including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

The illicit exploitation of natural resources is also of concern for small island developing States, undermining prospects for sustainable economic development and contributing to insecurity and instability. For example, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing undermines the sustainability of fisheries resources, harming food security and damaging economies, especially the blue economy. Many small island developing States, including in the Pacific, are particularly susceptible to the effects of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, given the significance of fisheries for their economies and livelihoods. Small island developing States often represent attractive targets for such fishing, given their large, unpoliced exclusive economic zones, relative isolation and high-value fisheries resources.

Climate change and natural disasters

The narrowly based national economies of many small island developing States make them especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change and weather-related disasters. Climate change acts as a risk multiplier, making existing security and development challenges more severe. Over time, this will increase competition for scarce resources and therefore the potential for armed conflict. Tackling climate change is not, on its own, sufficient to eliminate all the challenges that small island developing States are facing, but failure to act on climate change will undoubtedly make their future less secure.

Development

Development, peace and security are innately related. Inequality is a major root cause of conflict, and an inclusive society is crucial to development. Small island developing States have unique vulnerabilities that affect their development. Their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets place them at a disadvantage economically and prevent economies of scale. Given their unique economic circumstances, they also have limited capacity to fully

finance their development needs from competitive national and international sources.

Other issues

While small island developing States often face peace and security challenges, many have also sought to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, including through mediation or through contributions to peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. Consideration could be given to practical steps to help to facilitate such contributions.

The compliance burdens arising from Council resolutions and decisions can also have a disproportionate impact on small island developing States. The implementation of new international legal obligations can be a complex and resource-intensive exercise for all Member States, but it imposes a significant additional burden on small island developing States, given their limited resources and competing policy priorities. Even once frameworks are in place, the enforcement of sanctions, counter-terrorism or non-proliferation obligations (e.g., investigation of potential violations, prosecutions) can present further significant challenges for small island developing States and represent a disproportionate drain on their resources.

4. Impact on international peace and security

Challenges and vulnerabilities not only affect the peace and security of small island developing States, which are overrepresented among countries threatened by fragility and instability, but also have the potential to have an impact on regional and international peace and security. There are several examples over the past decades in which conflict in small island developing States has threatened regional security. Furthermore, while these issues have a disproportionate impact on those States, they are global in origin.

In an international rules-based system, all parts of the system must be supported. Larger countries and the multilateral system and organizations cannot continue to impose heavy one-size-fits-all requirements for small island developing States and expect them to fulfil their obligations without support.

At the same time, small island developing States are underrepresented on the Council. Over the past 25 years, only six such States have served as elected members of the Council, out of a total of 125 elected members serving during that period.

5. The role of the Security Council

Combating these threats and challenges will require multifaceted and collaborative responses from countries across the region and beyond. Understanding what role the Council and the United Nations system can play in working with small island developing States to address these challenges will be important for preventing future conflicts and maintaining international peace and security. The Council might reflect on how small island developing States can access the support that they need to mitigate these threats and related risks of conflict.

This open debate provides an opportunity for small island developing States to have their voices heard on the key peace and security challenges that they face and

for those States, Council members and other Member States to exchange views on how to effectively address them. Participants are encouraged to focus on practical measures to help small island developing States to overcome their peace and security challenges and to enable them to play their full part as active members of the international community.

The Secretary-General will brief the Council, followed by representatives of small island developing States, including Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa; Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica; and Jean-Paul Adams, Minister of Finance of the Seychelles, to discuss the peace and security challenges faced by small island developing States in different regions.

The outcome will be a non-paper under the responsibility of the New Zealand presidency of the Security Council synthesizing specific ideas and proposals put forward during the open debate. The non-paper will be circulated to all Member States by the end of the New Zealand presidency of the Council.

In addition to participating in the open debate, Member States are invited to send their written proposals (two to three ideas or proposals) by 11 a.m. on 30 July to the New Zealand Permanent Mission at the following address: nzpmun@gmail.com, copying nicola.hill@mfat.govt.nz.